

CATHERINE'S LITERARY WORK

T wish to robe myself anew in blood, and to strip myself of every raiment which I have worn up to now. I crave for blood; in the blood have I satisfied and shall satisfy my soul. I was deceived when I sought her among creatures ; so am I fain, in time of solicitude, to meet companions in the blood. Thus shall I find the blood and creatures, and I shall drink their affection and love in the blood."ⁱ

And Catherine carries this into actual life ; the blood that splashes the streets and palaces of the Italian cities in the fierce faction-fights, the blood that is poured out upon the scaffold at the Sienese place of execution, fires her imagination and seems shed by Love itself. The sight and smell of blood have no horror for her. We find the fullest realization of this in one of the most beautiful and famous of her letters, that to Fra Raimondo describing the end of the young noble of Perugia, Niccolo di Toldo, unjustly doomed to die by the government of Siena :—

" I went to visit him of whom you know, whereby he received such great comfort and consolation that he confessed, and disposed himself right well; and he made me promise by the love of God that, when the time of execution came, I would be with him; and so I promised and did. Then in the morning, before the bell tolled, I went to him, and he received great consolation ; I brought him to hear Mass, and he received the holy Communion, which he had never received since the first. That will of his was harmonized with and subjected to the will of God, and there only remained a fear of not being strong at the kst moment; but the measureless and inflamed goodness of God forestalled him, endowing him with so much affection -and love in the desir*; of God, that he could not stay without Him, and he said to me : ° Stay with me, and do not abandon me, so shall I fare not otherwise than well, and I shall die content'; and he leaned his head upon my breast. Then I exulted, and seemed to smell his blood, and mine too, which I desire to shed for the sweet Spouse Jesus, and, as the desire increased in my soul and I felt his fear, I said : ' Take heart, sweet brother mine, for soon shall we come to the

¹ Letter loz